



## THE INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE ON THE PERCEPTION OF THE WORLD

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### ABSTRACT

*This article examines how language shapes perception and cognitive frameworks, and explores the implications of linguistic relativity for education in Uzbekistan. Drawing on classical theorizing (Sapir-Whorf), contemporary cognitive-linguistic research, and recent developments in Uzbekistan's language policy and educational practice, the paper synthesizes evidence that language influences categories of attention, metaphorical framing, and pedagogical outcomes. A qualitative literature-review method was used to survey research on linguistic relativity, bilingualism, and national language reforms relevant to Uzbek schooling and higher education. Results indicate that (1) weak forms of linguistic relativity are supported by cross-linguistic studies, (2) bilingualism and medium-of-instruction choices (Uzbek, Russian, English) mediate perception and academic access, and (3) recent policy shifts in Uzbekistan — including acceleration of Latin-script adoption and expansion of English-medium instruction — have practical consequences for how new generations conceptualize knowledge domains. The discussion considers curricular, teacher-training, and assessment implications for Uzbek education and suggests directions for locally grounded research.*

### I. Introduction

For many decades, I have been intrigued by the question of whether and how language shapes the way people think and perceive the world. The discussion surrounding this issue, often framed within the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, continues to influence modern research across cognitive science, linguistics, and anthropology. While early interpretations of the hypothesis emphasized a strong deterministic relationship between language and thought, recent studies tend to support a weaker form—suggesting that language influences, but does not entirely determine, human cognition and perception.

In my view, this connection between language and thought becomes especially meaningful in the field of education. The language of instruction, along with its lexical and grammatical structures, directly affects how learners observe, categorize, and reason about their

surroundings. In multilingual societies such as Uzbekistan, where Uzbek, Russian, and English interact within academic and social contexts, the impact of language on perception acquires both theoretical and practical significance.

Observing the rapid changes taking place in Uzbekistan’s educational system—particularly the transition to the Latin alphabet and the growing implementation of English-medium instruction—I believe it is now a timely and necessary task to examine how these linguistic transformations influence students’ cognitive development, world perception, and learning outcomes. Through this study, I aim to highlight the role of language not only as a communicative tool but also as a powerful medium shaping the intellectual and cultural worldview of learners in modern Uzbekistan.<sup>1</sup>

## II. Methods

This paper is a focused qualitative literature review and policy scan. Sources were selected to (a) characterize the theoretical debate on linguistic relativity and cognition, (b) summarize empirical findings relevant to bilingualism and perception, and (c) document recent developments in Uzbekistan’s language policy and educational practice. Searches targeted peer-reviewed articles, regional journals, policy briefs, and institutional reports (2018–2025) in English, Russian, and Uzbek. Representative Uzbek-focused sources on cognitive-linguistic comparisons and national education reforms were included to ensure local relevance. Key documents reviewed include recent cognitive-linguistic studies comparing Uzbek and other languages, research on English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in Uzbekistan, and government/analyst reports on script transition and multilingual schooling.<sup>2</sup>

## III. Results (synthesis of findings)



### Theoretical and empirical landscape

- Linguistic relativity (weaker form): Contemporary scholarship generally rejects strong determinism but accepts that language biases attention and conceptual choices (e.g., categorization of color, spatial relations, and agency in event descriptions). Cross-linguistic

<sup>1</sup> [https://journal.fledu.uz/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2025/05/majitova-a.x.-2-1.pdf?utm\\_source](https://journal.fledu.uz/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2025/05/majitova-a.x.-2-1.pdf?utm_source)

<sup>2</sup> [https://zenodo.org/records/13903763?utm\\_source](https://zenodo.org/records/13903763?utm_source)

cognitive-linguistic studies support measurable influences of grammatical and lexical differences on speakers' non-linguistic performance<sup>3</sup>.

Evidence from Uzbek-focused linguistics

- Typological contrasts (Uzbek vs. English/Russian): Uzbek is agglutinative with morphological and lexical resources for encoding motion, aspect, and possession; English and Russian encode some semantic distinctions differently. Comparative cognitive-semantic studies of Uzbek and English show that metaphorical systems, categorization and some semantics differ in ways that can affect translation, teaching, and conceptual framing<sup>4</sup>.

Bilingualism and cognition in Uzbekistan

- Bilingual/ multilingual repertoires: Many Uzbek learners grow up in bilingual environments (Uzbek–Russian; Uzbek–English increasingly at tertiary level). Bilingual speakers can switch frames and strategies depending on language used; evidence from broader bilingualism research suggests such switching affects attention allocation and problem representation — with implications for classroom tasks, assessment, and metacognitive strategies<sup>5</sup>.

Policy and practice: Uzbekistan's education context

Script and policy changes: Uzbekistan has actively pursued Latin-script transition and broader language-planning measures; official decrees and policy documents in recent years accelerate Latin adoption and outline multilingual education goals. These reforms intersect with identity, materials development, and teacher training needs.

- Rise of English-Medium Instruction (EMI): Several universities and programs in Uzbekistan are expanding EMI to internationalize higher education and improve employability; this trend affects which conceptual vocabularies students first encounter in academic domains (e.g., science in English vs. Uzbek), which in turn may shape disciplinary framing and conceptual development<sup>6</sup>.

#### 4. Discussion

The review suggests three interconnected points relevant for Uzbek education:

Language shapes habitual attention and academic framing. While Uzbek speakers are not constrained to a single worldview by their language, habitual lexical and grammatical patterns guide what is salient. For example, if a language grammatically foregrounds agency differently, students may approach historical or scientific causation with different default emphases — an effect teachers should be aware of. (Supported by cross-linguistic cognitive-linguistic literature.)

Medium of instruction matters for conceptual access. Expanding EMI provides access to global knowledge but can also shift where students first learn specialized terminologies and metaphors (English vs. Uzbek). Where curricula lack robust bilingual glosses and pedagogical scaffolding, students risk shallow conceptual grasp or misalignment between everyday and academic categories. Policymakers should pair EMI expansion with translation of core concepts, glossaries, and teacher development.

<sup>3</sup> [https://journal.fledu.uz/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2025/05/majitova-a.x.-2-1.pdf?utm\\_source](https://journal.fledu.uz/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2025/05/majitova-a.x.-2-1.pdf?utm_source)

<sup>4</sup> (PDF) [Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Approaches and Concepts in English and Uzbek Languages](#)

<sup>5</sup> [https://grnjournal.us/index.php/STEM/article/view/2798?utm\\_source](https://grnjournal.us/index.php/STEM/article/view/2798?utm_source)

<sup>6</sup> [English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education in Uzbekistan: Views on Effectiveness, Career Prospects and Challenges](#)

Script and materials transitions have cognitive and practical consequences. The Latin-script transition affects literacy acquisition, materials production, and intergenerational transmission of texts. Transitional periods require careful material design so learners can continue to access cultural knowledge encoded in older scripts while acquiring new orthographic conventions. (table 1)

	Key Point	Explanation	Impact Area	Recommendation / Action
1	Language shapes habitual attention and academic framing	Lexical and grammatical patterns of a language guide what speakers consider important or salient in reasoning and interpretation.	Cognitive development, analytical thinking, classroom discourse	Train teachers to recognize linguistic framing effects and encourage multilingual analytical thinking in classrooms.
2	Medium of instruction matters for conceptual access	English-Medium Instruction (EMI) opens access to global knowledge, but the language in which students first learn key concepts affects how they understand and organize knowledge. Without bilingual glossaries or scaffolding, learners risk conceptual gaps or mismatches between everyday and academic categories.	Academic literacy, subject comprehension, bilingual education	Expand EMI with bilingual support: develop translated glossaries, dual-language materials, and targeted teacher training.
3	Script and materials transitions have cognitive and practical consequences	The transition to the Latin script affects literacy development, learning materials, and intergenerational transmission of written knowledge. Students need well-designed dual-script resources to preserve access to prior cultural and academic content.	Literacy acquisition, cultural continuity, educational resources	Provide parallel materials in Cyrillic and Latin during transition; gradually modernize textbooks and digital platforms.

## 5. Conclusion

Language influences perception and cognition in measurable but non-deterministic ways. In the Uzbek educational context — characterized by multilingual repertoires, script reforms, and expanding English-medium programs — these influences have direct pedagogical stakes. Policy and curriculum planners should acknowledge linguistic framing effects, invest in bilingual pedagogical materials, and train teachers to scaffold cross-linguistic conceptual mapping. Future empirical work should prioritize classroom experiments and longitudinal studies in Uzbekistan to document how changes in medium and script affect learning outcomes in specific domains.

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